Indo-Myanmar relationship

2634. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the measures taken up to improve the relationship between India and Myanmar;

(b) whether there is any talk between India and Myanmar to exchange the prisoners of the two countries;

(c) if so, by when; and

(d) if not the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Government have strengthened friendly relations with Myanmar through a policy of good neighbourly and constructive engagement. Measures adopted have included the establishment of institutional mechanisms for border management, cross-border projects on the basis of mutual benefit and the enhancement of economic, technical and cultural cooperation.

Focus areas include agriculture, human resource development, education, science and technology, development of infrastructural links to facilitate trade and tourism, narcotics control and border management. An MOU on Cooperation in the field of Agriculture & Allied Sectors was signed in April 1998; an Agreement on co- operation in the fields of Science & Technology was signed in June 1999. Myanmar is availing of training facilities in India in several fields including Information Technology. India has provided a line of credit for US$ 10 million, which Myanmar has used for rolling stock and other industrial equipment. Another agreement to extend a second credit line of US$ 15 million was signed in November, 2000. India and Myanmar have also signed an agreement on Cultural Cooperation on January 25, 2001. An MOU on maintenance of the Tamu-Kalemyo road was signed on 25th May, 2001 between the Government of India and the Government of the Union of Myanmar whereby the GOI will maintain the road for next 6 years.

(b) to (d) India and Myanmar are not holding any negotiations for concluding an agreement on transfer of convicted offenders, since India does not have an enabling legislation for entering into and implementing such an agreement.

Withdrawal of Pakistani troops from Kargil

2635. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the erstwhile President of the USA Mr. Bill Clinton has claimed that Pakistan withdrew its troops from Kargil on his insistence; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH):

(a) and (b) Government is aware of reports attributing these remarks to the former U.S. President regarding the meeting that took place between him and the former Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Nawaz Sharif on 4 July 1999 in Washington D.C.

Pakistan's armed intrusion in Kargil was defeated through the skills, professionalism, courage and valour of the Indian Armed Forces. The international community, including the United States, had criticised Pakistan for its action in Kargil and had advised the Government of Pakistan to reverse its intrusion.

Passport offices

2636. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of External Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) the number of passport offices in Rajasthan, Delhi and Orissa (State-wise) and (city-wise);

(b) whether Government have any proposal to relax the procedure with a view to expedite the issue of passport and to reduce the time taken in the process by opening more such offices in the above States; and

(c) if so, the details of the guidelines issued to the passport of each State in the above matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) One passport office each is located in Rajasthan (Jaipur), Delhi (Delhi) and Orissa (Bhubaneshwar).

(b) and (c) There is no proposal to open more passport offices in the above mentioned States. However, several measures have been taken to simplify and expedite processing of passport applications in various passport offices including the Passport Offices in Rajasthan, Delhi, and Orissa. These measures are : (a) computerisation of processing procedures, (b) simplification of passport application form, (c) introduction of Tatkal Scheme for issue of out of turn passport, (d) decentralisation of passport services to enbale submission of completed application form at designated speed post centres at district level, (e) provision of dispatch of passports by speed post, (f) introduction of machine writing of passports and (g) expediting police verification report with the Passport Officers holding regular consultation with the police authorities in their respective areas etc. Besides, the Govt. has recently constituted a Committee to review the passport issue system aimed at simplifying the process of issue of passports.

Chinese support of Pakistan on Kashmir

2637. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state: